

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 23070 01 OF 02 031328Z

47

ACTION DPW-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-10 ISO-00 AID-05 PM-04 NSC-05

SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PRS-01 DODE-00

DHA-02 /072 W

----- 108736

R 031138Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3665

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MANILA

CINCPAC HONOLULU

JCRC SAMAESAN, THAILAND

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 23070

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, UNHCR, VS, VN

SUBJECT: DEBRIEFING OF PAUL STRUHARIK

REF: A. STATE 256616; B. BANGKOK 22920; C. BANGKOK 22825

SUMMARY: PAUL STRUHARIK, (AID EMPLOYEE RELEASED BY DRV ON OCTOBER 30 (REFTELS) PROVIDES DETAILS OF THE FALL OF BAN ME THUOT AND OF HIS OBSERVATIONS DURING IMPRISONMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING IS AN ACCOUNT OF THE DEBRIEFING OF PAUL STRUHARIK, FORMER PROVINCE SENIOR ADVISOR IN DARLAC, WHO ARRIVED IN BANGKOK OCTOBER 30 FROM HANOI. IT DOES NOT INCLUDE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN SEPARATE SUBJECT TELEGRAMS.

2. ATTACK ON BAN ME THUOT: MARCH 10. BEGINNING AT 0300, THERE WERE EXPLOSIONS AND SMALL ARMS FIRE AT THE CITY  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 23070 01 OF 02 031328Z

AIRPORT. ENEMY ARTILLERY AIMED AT DIVISION HEADQUARTERS

COMMENCED FIRING. THE GVN DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS SIGNALEE A MAJOR ATTACK AND, INDEED, FIRING SOON ENDED. HOWEVER, IT RESUMED AT 0600. AT 0630 AN ASSAULT WAVE PASSED THROUGH BUON ALEI. AT 0700 THE OTHER AMERICANS ARRIVED AT STRUHARIK'S. HE ISSUED WEAPONS TO THE LOCAL EMPLOYEES AT 0830. AT THE SAME TIME PSDF RAN PAST HIS HOUSE REPORTING THAT NVA WERE NOW NEAR CARITAS (CATHOLIC RELIEF OFFICE). NVA INFANTRY PASSED STRUHARIK'S HOUSE AT 21000 AND NORTH VIETNAMESE WENT BY STRINGING TELEPHONE WIRE. (INCIDENTALLY, HE SAID HE WAS ABLE TO PICK UP NVA RADIO TRANSMISSIONS CLEARLY DURING THE ENTIRE BATTLE FOR BAN ME THUOT). AT 1030 HE SENT LOCAL EMPLOYEES HOME. THE FIRST NVA TROOPS TOOK UP POSITIONS OUTSIDE HIS HOUSE AT 1100, AT WHICH TIME EVERYONE INSIDE MAINTAINED SILENCE, WHICH CONTINUED UNTIL THE END. THEY FLUSHED TOILETS ONLY DURING BOMBING STRIKES. THE NORTH VIETNAMESE SET UP ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS AND FIVE T-54S DROVE BY. HE ALSO HEARD THAT FIFTEEN TANKS WERE MOVING IN FROM THE WEST TO ATTACK THE AMMUNITION DUMP. AT 1300 STRUHARIK CONTACTED THE FIRST HELICOPTERS OVERHEAD WITH HIS PRC-25, AND HIS HOUSE TOOK A COUPLE OF ROUNDS OF SMALL ARMS FIRE. FIGHTING DURING THAT FIRST EAY WAS MOSTLY AT THE CITY AIRFIELD, SECTOR HEADQUARTERS, AND THE DOWNTOWN MARKET. IN EARLY AFTERNOON, ARVN RANGERS TRIED TO MOVE IN TO THE CITY, AND THE GVN SET UP ARTILLERY TEN KILOMETERS TO THE NORTH-EAST. THERE WAS NO FIRING THAT NIGHT.

3. ON MARCH 11. AT 0730 A PLANE PASSED OVERHEAD, WITH WHICH HE COMMUNICATED. AA REMAINED AROUND HIS HOUSE, AND THERE WAS AN AIR STRIKE ON DIVISION HEADQUARTERS. (STRUHARIK BELIEVES THAT SECTOR WAS KNOCKED OUT THE PREVIOUS AFTERNOON BY ARTILLERY FIRE.) THERE WAS HEAVY FIGHTING OCCURRING AT DIVISION, AND HE COULD HEAR IT MOVING SOUTH. FIGHTING THAT DAY TOOK PLACE AT SECTOR, DIVISION, DOWNTOWN VILLAGE HEAD-QUARTERS, AND THE CITY AIRFIELD. STRUHARIK PRAISED VNAF FOR ITS AIR ACTIVITY THAT MORNING. NVA WERE LOCATED ALL OVER HIS PART OF THE CITY AND SET UP ARTILLERY ONLY FIFTY METERS FROM HIS HOUSE.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 23070 01 OF 02 031328Z

4. MARCH 12. AT 1225 BAN ME THUOT WAS VAPTURED. THE NVA MADE HEAVY USE OF ARTILLERY AND STRAIGHT ASSAULT TACTICS. THEY WERE REGULAR NVA, APPARENTLY THE NVA 320TH DIVISION AND F-10. THERE WAS LITTLE NIGHT FIGHTING. THEY ATTACKED BAN ME THUOT FROM THE NORTH, SOUTH, AND WEST. AFTER THE CITY FELL, THEY CAPTURED THE DISTRICTS. THEY TOOK THE PROVINCE CHIEF PRISONER, AFTER WHICH HE WAS SENT TO HANOI, STRUHARIK

UNDERSTANDS.

5. DESTRUCTION OF CLASSIFIED. STRUHARIK HAD NO OPPORTUNITY TO DESTROY ANY CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS, WHICH HE ASSUMES FELL INTO ENEMY HANDS.

6. IMPRISONMENT. AFTER THEIR CAPTURE, PRISONERS WERE SORTED OUT AND, ON MARCH 16, BEGAN THE ITINERARY DESCRIBED IN REF C. THE FELLOW PRISONERS OF THE BAN ME THUOT GROUP IN THE CAMPS INSIDE SOUTH VIET-NAM WERE A MIXTURE OF SOLDIERS FROM PHU BON AND DARLAC PROVINCES, INCLUDING MANY FROM THE 23RD DIVISION AND A NUMBER OF LOCAL FORCES. AT ONE OF THE SOUTHERN CAMPS STRUHARIK SAW A FULRO OFFICIAL, Y PREH; IMPRISONED. HE ALSO LEARNED THAT HIS (STRUHARIK'S) FATHER-IN-LAW WAS CAPTURED IN EARLY JULY. HE SAID HE NEVER SAW ANY OF HIS LOCAL EMPLOYEES DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT; HOWEVER, FELLOW DETAINEE TOLENTINO REPORTED SEEING Y DHAM, WHO WORKED ON LOCAL RESETTLEMENT, BEING LED THROUGH THE JUNGLE.

7. INITIAL INTERROGATION. PRISON AUTHORITIES AT THE CAMPS IN BOTH SOUTH AND NORTH WERE VIRTUALLY ALL NORTHERNERS. THEIR METHOD OF INTERROGATION WAS ALWAYS THE SAME, ALTERNATING BETWEEN - "NICE GUY" AND A "BAD GUY". STRUHARIK WAS INTERROGATED STEADILY FOR THE FIRST TWO WEEKS. HIS CAPTORS ASKED HIM FOR A LIST OF HIS EMPLOYEES; HE REFUSED, AND THEY BECAME THREATENING, BUT HE RESISTED THEIR DEMANDS SUCCESSFULLY. THEY ALSO REQUESTED A LIST OF ALL HIS AMERICAN CONTACTS, WHICH HE ALSO REFUSED. (ONLY AT THE END OF HIS CAPTIVITY IN THE NORTH DID HE PROVIDE THE LATTER, SINCE IT DID NOT MATTER ANY LONGER.)  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BANGKO 23070 01 OF 02 031328Z

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 23070 02 OF 02 031559Z

47

ACTION DPW-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-10 ISO-00 AID-05 PM-04 NSC-05

SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PRS-01 DODE-00

DHA-02 /072 W

----- 110380

R 031138Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3666

INFO AHCONSUL HONG KONG 6744

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MANILA

CINCPAC HONOLULU

JCRC SAMAESAN, THAILAND

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 23070

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

8. SOLITARY CONFINEMENT. ON OCTOBER 6 STRUHARIK WAS TAKEN TO A SPOT OUTSIDE SON TAY (WEST OF HANOI) AND PLACED IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT FOR THREE WEEKS. THIS WAS ACCOMPANIED BY INTENSIVE INTERROGATION, OFTEN LASTING FROM 0700 TO 2200. THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WERE SEEKING A CONFESSION THAT HE WAS ACTUALLY A COLONEL AND DICTATING MOVES TO THE PROVINCE CHIEF OR THAT HE WAS INVOLVED WITH FULRO AND WAS A CIA AGENT USING AID AS A COVER. THEY REMINDED HIM CONSTANTLY THAT HIS DESTINY WAS IN THEIR HANDS. FINALLY, THEY TOLD HIM THAT IF HE CONFESSED, HE WOULD BE ABLE TO REJOIN HIS FAMILY SOON. STRUHARIK SIGNED ONLY THREE REQUESTS FOR RELEASE DISCUSSED SEPTTEL. HE BELIEVES HIS INTERROGATORS WERE ALL MAJORS AND COLONELS (THEY WORE NO INSIGNIA) AND WERE VERY EXPERIENCED AT WHAT THEY WERE DOING.

9. FULRO. ONE OF THE NORTH VIET-NAM'S PRINCIPAL AIMS WAS  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 23070 02 OF 02 031559Z

TO UNCOVER U.S. SUPPORT FOR FULRO. BECAUSE OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE POLICY OF ALLOWING FAMILIES OF THOSE BEING HELD PRISONER TO VISIT THEM AT THE SOUTHERN PRISON CAMPS, IT WAS POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN NEWS OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING ON THE OUTSIDE. AS LATE AS AUGUST, HE HEARD THAT FULRO WAS INTERDICTING TRAVEL ON BOTH ROUTES 14 AND 21 IN DARLAI PROVINCE, WITH THE NVA CONFINED TO BAN ME THUOT AND THE DISTRICT CAPITALS. FULRO REPORTEDLY DROVE THE NVA OUT OF A VIETNAMESE VILLAGE NAMED TRUNG HOA. FROM THE LINE OF QUESTION-

ING BEING USED WITH HIM, STRUHARIK ALSO RECEIVED THE IMPRESSION THAT FULRO HAD ATTACKED BAN ME THUOT.

10. SON TAY OFFICIALS. AT SON TAY CAMP, THE OFFICER IN CHARGE WAS NAMED VAN, BUT HIS REAL NAME WAS YUNG. IN DEALINGS WITH THE PRISONERS AND INTERROGATIONS, HE WAS THE "GOOD GUY". THE INTERPRETER LIAISON OFFICER WAS NAMED KHOI. THE POLITICAL CADRE AT THE CAMP WAS THE PERSON WHO CALLED THE SHOTS. HE WAS PROBABLY AN NVA CAPTAIN, DESCRIBED AS NASTY. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THERE WAS HOSTILITY BETWEEN THE POLITICAL CADRES AND THE REGULAR TROOPS, WHICH THEY DID NOT ATTEMPT TO HIDE. THE POLITICAL CADRE COULD TALK ONLY IN COMMUNIST IDEOLOGICAL TERMS; THE NVA TROOPS, MUCH LESS SO.

11. SON TAY CAMP. STRUHARIK SAID THAT HIS NORTH VIETNAMESE PRISON RESEMBLED MORE A ZOO OR A CIRCUS THAN ANYTHING ELSE. PEOPLE WERE CONSTANTLY COMING TO GAWK AT THE PRISONERS.

12. OTHER PRISONERS. THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WERE VERY SENSITIVE TO THE CHARGE THAT THEY ARE HOLDING OTHER AMERICANS PRISONER. IT WAS MUCH EASIER FOR THEM TO REFER TO U.S. REFUSAL TO FULFILL ARTICLE 21 OF THE PARIS PEACE AGREEMENTS AND TO OUR SUPPORT FOR THE THIEU GOVERNMENT. THEY WOULD NOT BRING UP THE SUBJECT OF OTHER PRISONERS AND WOULD DISCUSS IT ONLY IF SOMEONE RAISED IT.

13. OBSERVATIONS ON NORTH VIETNAMESE. DURING HIS TIME IN CAPTIVITY, STRUHARIK WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE TOUGHNESS, DISCIPLINE, AND DEDICATION OF THE NVA. NOT ONLY WERE THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 23070 02 OF 02 031559Z

NORTH VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST, BUT THERE WAS JUST THAT QUANTITY OF EXTRA ZEAL PILED ON TOP, PERHAPS BUILT UP DURING THE LONG YEARS OF STRUGGLE. HE FOUND ALL NORTH VIETNAMESE VERY DISTRUSTFUL OF ONE ANOTHER.

14. COMMENT. THE EMBASSY FOUND STRUHARIK TO BE AN EXCELLENT OBSERVER, RELATING CAREFULLY AND, WE BELIEVE, ACCURATELY, HIS MEMORIES AND THOUGHTS BASED ON SEVEN MONTHS OF IMPRISONMENT.  
WHITEHOUSE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRISONERS RELEASE, POLITICAL PRISONERS, PRESS CONFERENCES, PRISON CONDITIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 03 NOV 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** CunninFX  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975BANGKO23070  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750381-0159  
**From:** BANGKOK  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t19751182/aaaacveb.tel  
**Line Count:** 271  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION DPW  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 5  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 75 STATE 256616, 75 BANGKOK 22920, 75 BANGKOK 22825  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** CunninFX  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 27 MAY 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <27 MAY 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <04 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** DEBRIEFING OF PAUL STRUHARIK  
**TAGS:** CASL, PFOR, VS, VN, US, UNHCR, (STRUHARIK, PAUL)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006